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## Research Paper

## Women Empowerment

Vidyadevi Patil

## ABSTRACT

*'Empowerment' the word has derived from the word power. The term 'power' is understood as the capacity to do anything. In the social context, 'power' is understood as authority, right to command, right to govern or rule, capacity to influence, etc. Empowerment in normal term means vesting power where it does not exist or exist adequately. In this paper we have tried to explain the meaning and importance of Empowerment. Further we have explain concept and importance of empowerment of women, role of education in the same and factors facilitating the empowerment of women.*

## INTRODUCTION –

As explained in the extract, empowerment simply means decentralization of power. Empowerment is the process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision making power and control, and to transformative action. With reference to women the power that has to be involved includes their lives at multiple levels, family, community, society and the state. Empowering women is a pre-requisite condition for creating a good nation. When women are empowered society with stability is assured. What is the role of education in empowerment of women is the question that has been addressed in the paper. In the final section, constitutional provisions, special laws and national policies in support of women empowerment in the context of India are analysed categorically.

Women are usually seen have more deprived status in terms of access to resources and enjoyment of right and freedom that together enhance the quality of human life. There is continued inequality and vulnerability in all sectors – economic, social, political, education, health care, nutrition and legal. Women are oppressed in all the spheres of life and as such they need to be empowered in all social contexts. The gender disparities lead to another grave handicap affecting women and their relative power to conduct their lives as autonomous and self reliant beings.

## EMPOWERMENT – CONCEPT

The empowerment approach was first clearly activated in 1985 by Development Alternatives With Women for New Era (DAWN). In the mid 1980's, the term empowerment became popular in the field of development, especially with the reference of women. 'Power' is the key word of the term 'Empowerment' which means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. According to Webster's New World Dictionary (1982) this prefix is used to form a verb meaning "to make, make into or like, cause to be". Thus "to empower" is to make or cause power. Hence, the noun 'Empowerment' refers to the process by which power is gained, developed, seized, facilitated or given.

Empowerment broadly refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life. It has the capacity of creating new dimensions of lives of excluded groups to set access to different social development paradigms. Thus empowerment is the expansion of resources, capabilities, abilities, choices, and decision making of people to participate in, negotiate with influence, control, and held accountable institution that affect their life.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: CONCEPT

The concept of women empowerment appears to be the outcome of several important critiques, discussion, dialogues and debates generated by the woman movement throughout the world, especially in the third world countries (feminist). TO empower women is to give them power. 'Power' here does not mean a mode of domination over others, but an exposure of inner strength and confidence to face life, the right to determine one's choice in life, the ability to influence the society and social change, a share in decision making and capacity- building for the sake of national development.

Empowerment is an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life.

At the workshop of Pacific Women entitled 'Women, Development and Empowerment (1987)', Venessa Griffen spoke about what empowerment means to her: To me, the word simply means, adding to women's power. To me power means having control, organizing further control, having a say and being listened to, being able to define and create from women's perspective, being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society, being organized and respected as equal citizens and human being with a contribution to make.

In a broader sense, empowerment of women means two things – liberty from her subordination in the family and release from her sub-alternate in the society. It represents three types of freedom – freedom of ignorance, freedom from exploitation and freedom from inequality and injustice.

**Constitutional Provisions and Special laws in support of women empowerment:**

There are certain articles in the constitution which are in support of women empowerment. They are as follows

- Men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres.
- Prohibition discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc.
- Special provision enabling the state to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women.
- Equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens.
- Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- To renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

**The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955:**

This Act prohibits polygamy, polyandry and child marriage and concedes equal rights to women to divorce and to remarry.

**Role of Education in Empowering Women:**

The greatest single factor which can incredibly improve the status of women in any society is education. It is indispensable that education enables women not only to gain more knowledge about the world outside of her hearth and home but helps her to get status, positive self esteem, a and self confidence, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life. Education especially of women has a major impact on health and nutrition as an instrument of developing a sustainable strategy for population control. Moreover educated women can play an equally important role as men in nation building.

The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making and development activities. Education plays the most crucial role in empowering women. It is education that provides knowledge, awareness in regards to social, civic, political, economic and environmental issues and skills for securing employment and means of livelihoods.

**Factors Facilitating Empowerment of Women:**

Various socio-economic and political factors facilitate the empowerment of women.

- Acknowledging Women's Right: Society should recognize that like men, women are also entitled to equal rights.
- Freedom to take decision and make Choices: Women should have freedom to decide whether to marry or not to marry; and after marriage, the freedom to decide as to how many children that they should have, and so on.
- Access to Education and Employment: Women can become stronger only with educational and economic power. Sufficient economic freedom is a must for women to lessen their dependence on men.
- Opportunity for political participation: If women's choice is to carry more weight they must be given political power. They must be free to take part in the administrative process.

**CONCLUSION:**

To conclude with, empowerment is a continuous process of realizing the ideals of equality, human liberation and freedom for all. Women empowerment implies equality of opportunity and equity between the genders and age groups, strengthening of life chances, collective participation in different spheres of life- cultural, social, political, economic, development process, decision making, etc. It is necessary to create an environment that will allow women to participate in educational programs and share benefits. There is also a necessity to develop forms of education that will sensitize people towards gender discrimination and will raise their acceptance of women's promotion. The educational and other policies for women empowerment should be implemented in reality for empowering women in India.

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